

Fighting Crime And Drugs In Iowa

Prepared by the Office of Senator Tom Harkin



SOUTH CENTRAL IOWA METHAMPHETAMINE TASK FORCE

Senator Harkin secured \$2 million in federal funding to set up the South Central Iowa Meth Task Force -- a 17-county task force of local, state and federal law enforcement to better coordinate efforts to find and eradicate meth labs in that region.

Harkin secured the resources following discussions with Bruce Upchurch, Director of the Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy. Upchurch told Senator Harkin that this part of the state had experienced a sharp increase in meth lab activity compared to the rest of the state.

In 2000, 641 meth labs were seized statewide - 365 of those labs were found in this 17-county region. In 2001 764 labs were seized around the state - 312 were from this region. And in the first two months of 2002, 52 labs have been seized in the region compared to 47 at the same time last year.

The task force will not only focus on finding these labs, but will proactively work to prevent them through more intense investigations in this coordinated effort.

The Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement will oversee the task force. The counties include: Story, Dallas, Polk, Jasper, Madison, Warren, Marion, Union, Clarke, Lucas, Monroe, Wapello, Ringgold, Decatur, Wayne, Appanoose and Davis. The National Guard Counter Drug program and the US Attorneys offices will also provide investigative assistance and resources.

ABOUT METH

Meth "labs" are often found in the cabs of old trucks, in ditches and in sheds. They're used and then abandoned, usually with chemicals, such as anhydrous ammonia left behind.

Meth is a highly addictive central nervous system stimulant that can be injected, snorted, smoked or ingested orally. Meth users feel a short yet intense "rush" when the drug is initially administered. The effects of meth include increased activity, decreased appetite, and a sense of well being that can last 6 to 8 hours.

Meth can easily be manufactured in clandestine labs using store bought materials and is the most prevalent synthetic drug manufactured in the U.S. "Cooking" a batch of meth can be very dangerous due to the fact that the chemicals used are volatile and the by-products very toxic. Meth producers often steal anhydrous ammonia from the tanks farmers use to fertilize their soil in the spring.

Meth labs not only present a danger to the producer, they also pose a public health hazard to the community surrounding the labs, and the law enforcement officers who discover them. When a meth lab is seized, the clean up requires special training and costs between \$3,000 and \$150,000, depending on the size.

ADMINISTRATION'S BUDGET SLASHES LAW ENFORCEMENT

The administration's budget proposal cuts local law enforcement grants by \$1.2 billion. The budget eliminates the billion dollar COPs grant program and merges the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant and the Edward Byrne grant program into one - and then cuts its funding by \$196 million from last year's budget.

Just last year, Iowa received \$4.6 million to hire 29 officers under the COPs grant program. Iowa also received an additional \$2 million from COPs to eliminate the supply and demand of methamphetamine in the state. The Byrne grant program provided Iowa with \$5.6 million last year to fund its regional meth task forces.